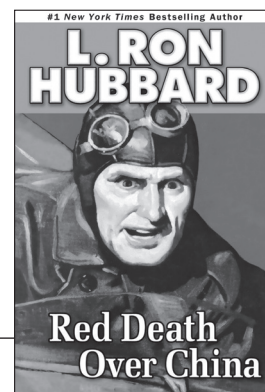


L. Ron Hubbard's *Red Death Over China* Discussion Guide

(also includes the short stories
The Crate Killer and *Wings Over Ethiopia*)



STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

American pilot John Hampton flies wherever the money takes him, caring little about the outcome of the Chinese Civil War or the people caught in it. But after becoming involved with soldiers fighting for their survival, Hampton begins questioning the values that have guided his life. As danger increases and impossible decisions must be made, he discovers that courage and loyalty sometimes demand far more than personal survival. The author blends aerial adventure with historical conflict to tell a story of sacrifice, leadership and redemption.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE CHINESE CIVIL WAR

Red Death Over China takes place during the Chinese Civil War, one of the twentieth century's defining conflicts. Following the collapse of China's imperial government in 1912, rival political factions competed for control of the country. The conflict eventually centered on the Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist forces led by Mao Zedong.

The story occurs after the Communist forces completed the Long March (1934–1935), a remarkable retreat that preserved Mao's army despite overwhelming odds. Although the Nationalists and Communists temporarily united against the Japanese invasion during the Second Sino-Japanese War, the civil war resumed after World War II. It did not conclude until 1949 with the establishment of the People's Republic of China.

The author uses this historical setting to tell a fictional story that explores loyalty, sacrifice, leadership and the power of personal change.

CHAPTER ONE: A PILOT WITHOUT A CAUSE

📖 Why does Hampton seem emotionally detached from the conflict around him? Although surrounded by war, Hampton initially appears interested only in earning money. Discuss what experiences might cause someone to become disconnected from the people and events around them.

📖 How does Chou's commitment to the cause differ from Hampton's outlook? The two men approach the conflict with very different motivations. Compare their attitudes toward duty, loyalty and personal responsibility.

📖 Why does Hampton decide to rescue the officer being pursued? His actions seem to conflict with his stated priorities. Discuss whether people always understand their own motivations and explain your reasoning.

📖 How did military aircraft change warfare during the early twentieth century? Aviation was still a relatively new technology during the period in which the story is set. Compare the role of aircraft during this era with their use in more recent conflicts.

CHAPTER TWO: THE LEGEND OF THE RED PAGODA

📖 Why do societies preserve stories of sacrifice? Captain P'eng recounts the story of Lin and the Red Pagoda as an example of courage and devotion. Discuss how legends and historical stories influence the values and actions of later generations.

📖 Was Lin wise or foolish to sacrifice himself? Hampton dismisses Lin's actions as unnecessary, while others view them as heroic. Discuss both perspectives and explain which you find more convincing.

📖 How do Captain P'eng and Hampton represent different ideas about duty? P'eng remains deeply committed to his mission, while Hampton insists he works only for money. Compare their motivations and discuss what this contrast reveals about each man.

📖 How have places in history shaped the people who live there? The chapter describes a city whose past stretches across many centuries and dynasties. Discuss how history influences culture, traditions and identity.

CHAPTER THREE: CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

📖 Why do some people struggle to accept praise? Although others admire Hampton's courage, he seems uncomfortable receiving recognition. Discuss why some individuals find it difficult to acknowledge their accomplishments.

📖 What experiences are most likely to change a person's values? Hampton begins questioning the beliefs that have guided his life. Discuss whether success, failure, loss, or other experiences are most likely to inspire genuine self-reflection.

CHAPTER FOUR: CHOOSING TO STAY

📖 Why do Liang and the peasant willingly remain behind despite the danger? Both characters knowingly place themselves at great personal risk. Discuss the values that motivate their decision and whether you think they made the right choice.

📖 How does their sacrifice compare with examples from history? Many people throughout history have accepted great personal risk to protect others. Compare the actions in this chapter with a historical, military, emergency response, or everyday example.

📖 Is a person's first responsibility to protect themselves or to serve a greater cause? Explain your answer. The chapter raises difficult questions about duty and self-preservation. Discuss different viewpoints and explain where you believe the balance should lie.

CHAPTER FIVE: A DIFFERENT MAN

 How does Hampton's explanation of Liang's death reveal that he has changed? Rather than viewing the deaths as meaningless, Hampton now recognizes the larger purpose behind their sacrifice. Discuss what this reveals about his evolving understanding of duty.

 When can caution be an act of courage? Hampton refuses an order to attack despite the city's desperate situation. Discuss why declining a dangerous mission may sometimes require as much courage as accepting one.

 How has Hampton changed since the beginning of the story? Compare his decisions and attitudes in this chapter with those in Chapter One. Identify the moments that reveal genuine personal growth while noting any qualities that remain unchanged.

CHAPTER SIX: LEADERSHIP UNDER PRESSURE

 How do rumors affect people during times of crisis? As uncertainty spreads through the city, conflicting information influences decisions and emotions. Compare this situation with modern examples of rumors or misinformation during emergencies.

 How should leaders balance risk against potential reward? Captain P'eng believes Hampton should have attempted the mission, while Hampton believes doing so would have accomplished nothing. Discuss both viewpoints and explain which seems more persuasive.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE FINAL CHOICE

 How does Hampton's final act compare with the sacrifices made by Lin, Chou, Liang and Captain P'eng? Throughout the story, several characters willingly risk their lives for others. Compare their decisions and discuss what they have in common.

 What does Hampton mean when he thinks, "That guy was right"? His final realization recalls the earlier story of Lin and the Red Pagoda. Discuss how this moment completes Hampton's personal transformation.

 What message does the story communicate about sacrifice, leadership and personal responsibility? Reflect on the story as a whole and discuss whether you agree with its central ideas. Explain your reasoning.

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The Crate Killer

Discussion Guide

STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

Test pilot “Jumper” Bailey has earned a reputation for bailing out of failing airplanes, leading many people to question his courage. In reality, his dangerous work has required him to push experimental aircraft beyond their limits to improve aviation safety. When Bailey faces the most hazardous flight of his career, he must decide whether to save himself or risk everything for a greater purpose. The author explores the nature of courage, humility and professional responsibility against the backdrop of aviation’s pioneering years.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Crate Killer takes place during the rapid expansion of military aviation in the 1930s. Aircraft technology advanced so quickly that every new design required experienced test pilots to fly unproven airplanes before they entered service. Mechanical failures were common, safety systems remained limited and every test flight involved significant personal risk.

The work performed by these early test pilots helped improve aircraft performance, reliability and safety. Many innovations developed during this period later proved essential during World War II and continued influencing both military and civilian aviation for decades afterward.

Against this historical setting, the author tells a fictional story that examines how courage is often misunderstood and how true professionalism is demonstrated through quiet determination rather than public recognition.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

📖 Why can reputations become more powerful than facts? Many people assume Bailey is cowardly because he has parachuted from damaged aircraft so many times. Discuss how incomplete information can shape public opinion and identify modern examples where reputation overshadows reality.

📖 Why are test pilots important to aviation? Experimental aircraft cannot become reliable until someone is willing to fly them. Explain the role test pilots have played in advancing aviation and the risks they have historically accepted.

📖 Should people trust their own opinions about themselves? Major Harvey believes Bailey is careless, while Bailey accepts much of the criticism directed toward him. Discuss whether people are always the best judges of their own strengths and weaknesses.

 Why is it important for leaders to share the risks faced by those they lead? Mrs. Harvey criticizes her husband for expecting others to accept dangers that he does not personally experience. Discuss whether effective leadership requires sharing hardships alongside the people being led.

 What does Bailey's response to criticism reveal about his character? Rather than becoming defensive or bitter, Bailey quietly continues doing his job. Discuss whether humility is always a strength or whether it can sometimes become a disadvantage.

 How can firsthand experience change a person's perspective? Major Harvey's opinion begins to change only after experiencing the dangers Bailey faces himself. Compare this with situations where direct experience teaches lessons that observation alone cannot.

 Why does Bailey try to save the airplane instead of immediately saving himself? When the aircraft catches fire, Bailey has an opportunity to escape. Discuss why he chooses to protect the aircraft first and how that decision reflects his sense of responsibility.

 Is courage the absence of fear or the willingness to act despite fear? Bailey repeatedly enters dangerous situations while fully understanding the risks involved. Explain how his actions support your definition of courage.

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Wings Over Ethiopia

Discussion Guide

STORY SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

American pilot Colter finds himself caught in the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, where misunderstandings, suspicion and rapidly changing loyalties threaten his survival. Mistaken for a spy by multiple sides, Colter must rely upon courage, communication and quick thinking as he navigates a dangerous conflict. Blending historical events with fast-paced adventure, the author explores the importance of trust, cultural understanding and perseverance during one of the final colonial wars before World War II.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Wings Over Ethiopia is set during the Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935–1936), when Fascist Italy, led by Benito Mussolini, invaded Ethiopia to expand its colonial empire. Ethiopia, ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie, was one of the few independent nations in Africa at the time.

Italy employed modern military technology—including aircraft, tanks and chemical weapons—against a nation with far fewer industrial resources. Although Ethiopia was eventually occupied, its determined resistance became an enduring symbol of opposition to aggression. The conflict also exposed the League of Nations’ inability to prevent military expansion, foreshadowing the international tensions that would soon escalate into World War II.

Against this historical backdrop, the author tells a fictional story in which survival depends as much upon communication, trust and resourcefulness as military strength.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

📖 How does speaking another language change the course of the story? Colter’s ability to communicate in Italian becomes essential to his survival. Discuss how events might have unfolded differently without a shared language and whether learning additional languages remains valuable today.

📖 Why do people sometimes judge others by appearance before knowing the facts? The Ethiopian soldiers initially assume Colter and Singer are enemies. Compare this situation with modern examples where first impressions proved misleading.

📖 Are misunderstandings more common during wartime than during peacetime? Throughout the story, both the Ethiopian and Italian forces repeatedly mistake Colter for a spy. Discuss why conflict often increases suspicion and miscommunication.

 Were Dejazwach's decisions reasonable, given the information available? The Ethiopian officer must make difficult choices under uncertain circumstances. Evaluate his actions and explain whether you would have made similar decisions.

 What responsibilities do journalists have when reporting from a war zone? Accurate reporting becomes especially challenging during military conflicts. Discuss how journalists should balance speed, safety and accuracy while informing the public.

 Why was Ethiopia's resistance historically significant? Although Ethiopia was ultimately occupied, its resistance influenced international opinion and highlighted the growing threat of aggression during the 1930s. Discuss why the conflict became an important turning point in world history.

 How did aircraft transform warfare during the 1930s? Aviation played an increasingly important role during the conflict portrayed in the story. Compare military aircraft of the 1930s with those used in earlier wars.

 How does Colter's motivation change during the story? At first, financial reward appears to be Colter's primary concern. Discuss whether his priorities change as events unfold and compare his growth with someone from history, literature, or real life whose motivations evolved over time.

 Why is humor sometimes valuable during dangerous situations? The ending provides a lighter moment after prolonged tension. Discuss how humor can help people cope with fear, uncertainty and stressful experiences.

 Why can official reports differ from what actually happened? The story suggests that truth is not always reflected in newspapers or official accounts. Discuss examples from history where later evidence revealed a more complete or different understanding of events.

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